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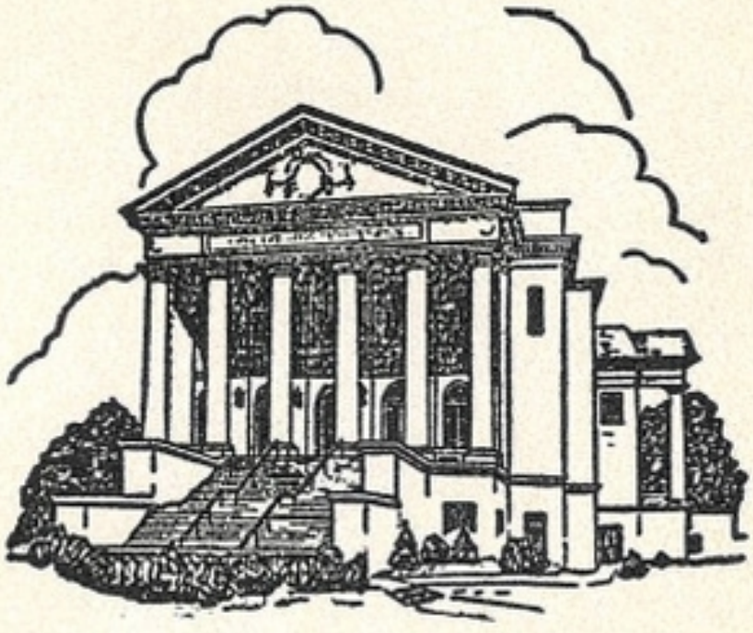
"A Revolution Is On!"

By Dr. Albert P. Shirkey



Mount Vernon Place Methodist Church

Washington, D. C.

"A Revolution Is On!"

Text: *"And you will know the truth and the truth will make you free."* John 8:32

We are facing some great changes in our nation's life. There are times when a sermon needs to deal strictly with the issues before us as a people. This is one of those times.

Our subject today is, "A Revolution is On." Let me give you this definition of a revolution from the dictionary, "to effect a marked or radical or complete change in something." If this definition is accepted, then, as a nation, we have passed through a series of revolutions and are now in the midst of one in our search for God's great gift of freedom.

Our First Revolution was our "Declaration of Independence," declaring ourselves free to govern ourselves. Richard Henry Lee of Virginia, moved on June 7, "that these united colonies are, and, of right, ought to be free and independent states." This was seconded by John Adams of Massachusetts, and The Declaration was drafted by Thomas Jefferson, was debated and finally signed by the majority of the members—and the famous liberty bell in Independence Hall was rung as never before on the Fourth of July, 1776—giving new meaning to the legend engraved upon it—"proclaim liberty to all the land and to the inhabitants thereof."

Then followed The Revolutionary War and the principles of this document, The Declaration of Independence, became the law of the land.

Our Second Revolution was to snap the chains of slavery placed upon the lives of the Negroes within the boundaries of our land. It became the law of the land that no man shall own another, when President Abraham Lincoln signed "The Proclamation of Emancipation."

There followed the Civil War that brought about the triumph of the union of these United States of America, and the Proclamation became the law of the land.

Our Third Revolution has been the struggle throughout the nation to insure that no man shall, because of color, class, condition, religion or national origin, be made a second-class citizen. We have come now to the place where these words are given new meaning, as expressed in our Declaration, "that all men are created equal—that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights—among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

And now has come new meaning in our salute to the flag—"One nation under God, . . . with liberty and justice for all."

Regardless of how we, personally, feel about these Revolutions, the principles growing out of them have become the law of the land, and we shall obey them and be among the law-abiding, or we shall disobey and be numbered among the lawless.

Will you hear these words given by our late President, John Fitzgerald Kennedy, to the nation, October 30, 1962:

"Our nation is founded on the principle that the observance of the law is the eternal safeguard of liberty and defiance of the law is the surest road to tyranny—

Even among law-abiding men, few laws are universally loved. But they are uniformly respected and not resisted.

Americans are free, in short, to disagree with the law, but not to disobey it. For any government of laws is not of men, no man—however prominent and powerful—and no mob—however unruly or boisterous—is entitled to defy a court of law."

Therefore, let me suggest, in the light of what our late President John F. Kennedy said, that we either elect to be a law-abiding citizenry, or elect to live under tyranny, and, I believe we will, as a people—North, East, South and West, elect to live under law, for we have demonstrated again and again through the years of our history, that we are a law-abiding people.

Now that we have The Civil Rights Bill as the law of the land—which says that no man, because of race, class, color or religion, shall be excluded from any privilege or opportunity granted to any other—let me be bold to suggest the ways to help make the law work. We shall always give each other the right to disagreement—but always grant to others the same rights and privileges that we want for ourselves. This is the glory of democracy.

1. Give to the President of our country our full support in keeping the United States of America a law-abiding nation. (Whether we belong to one party or another, let us give him the support as the leader of our nation, whose responsibility it is to see that these laws of the land are carried out.)

2. Call off all demonstrations either by youth or adults—black or white—in every section of our land. Let all outside pressures cease. Let every state and every part of the nation put into operation the law of the land. And should there be disobedience at any place, then let the government of these United States settle this as only the nation can.

3. Ask our President and Congress to urge the calling home of all the young people whose very presence in any state agitates the local situation and endangers the lives of these young people and others.

4. Let the government test and try the law—and only the government, which has the right and the power to enforce it.

5. Let there now be the "cooling off" period when we can think with our minds and not our emotions.

6. Let every effort be made now to repair the ties of friendship across all lines that have been strained or broken in the fight on "Civil Rights." There have been many Negro and white leaders whose relationships have been strained and completely damaged in this great struggle. We need a period in which we can build again the broken

walls of understanding across all of these lines and only in that kind of an atmosphere can a great nation win her soul, her life and her strength.

7. Let us now seek God's favor and plead his forgiveness that we might be made free from the slavery of hate and misunderstanding that has enveloped us all.

8. Let us, as a united people, begin "A New Revolution" against everything and anything that seeks the overthrow of freedom of any people throughout the world, and against anything that strikes at the dignity of human personality and robs the weak of the abundance of life which is the gift of God.

Now, if you will allow me the privilege of stating my convictions I would like to say, paraphrasing a statement made so famous by Patrick Henry, "I care not what course others may take, but as for me I shall be and remain, now and always, a law-abiding citizen."

The law is with us —

Let it work.

And in this time of testing I have searched my soul to think of the word that Uncle Sam might speak to his children in this hour. This is what I feel he would say:

"A CREED FOR AMERICA"

Uncle Sam Speaks

Let there be work for all my sons and daughters
Let there be schools and colleges and universities where they shall be TRAINED
Let there be hours of leisure where play and laughter and relaxation
Shall enable parents and children to grow up together in health and happiness.
Let there be times of exercise where ripe minds shall be undergirded with strong bodies.

Let the factories and plants run, and the business operate,
So that industry and business shall supply the employment that will give ample work to my people.
Let the dignity of labor be cherished as a rich heritage.

Let there be strong armies of defense, whose purpose shall be to defend the shores against the onslaught of aggression, but never used to initiate wars.
Let Congress and all departments of government be the breeding place of Statesmen who shall consider no personal cost too great,
To serve all the people, all the time, in all places and in all walks of life.

Let streams of brotherhood flow on to form an ocean of cooperation and brotherly love.
Let my people live in friendship and harmony with one another.
Let my public and private schools be the place where democracy is practiced, and where understanding becomes a way of life,
And where mutual respect and appreciation for differences are welcomed and nurtured.

Let my Cathedrals, Temples and Churches and houses of worship be the place where love for God and one's fellowman
Are both caught and taught by those who hold in trust, and who share
The Spiritual treasury of the ages.
Let each and all who believe, hold and keep this faith—"In God We Trust."

Let there be the constant effort to conserve the rich deposits of
My minerals, oils, and water, that these may be enough now and always for
All my sons and daughters.
Let there be reverence for life for which each shall be held accountable.
Let there be a refusal to countenance or tolerate crime,
Disease, poverty, unemployment, race hatred or any other thing in the
Social Order that strikes at the abundant life for all.
This is my word to each and all of you.
This great land is yours—all of it, as long as you keep my commandments.
Should you fail to keep my word, weaknesses will appear within the structure of the nation and

you shall be overcome by enemies within and without and you shall perish!!

Walk in my ways and obey my precepts and you shall know the joy of freedom, the excitement of living, the rich rewards of learning, the inspiration of brotherhood and the benedictions of peace.

This is my word to each of you.

(signed)

Your Uncle Sam

The days of testing are upon us to see, as President Abraham Lincoln said at Gettysburg, "whether this nation, dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated can long endure." I believe that as a people we shall search our souls to find the truth and as our Lord said, "the truth will make us free."

I feel that this is America's highest hour, and that we shall emerge from all our struggles to serve as never before all of the people, in all of their ways, all the time,—and God grant that it shall be so!

PRAYER

Our Father, we come today asking Thee to search us. Thou hast weighed us so often in the balances of Thy judgment and have found us wanting, and today is no exception to the rule. In thought, word and deed we have sinned against Thy divine majesty, and are not worthy to lift up our eyes and call ourselves Thy children. But Thou art a Father plenteous in lovingkindness, patient and good. Thou dost deal with us not after our sins, but Thou dost deal with us according to Thy love for us and for this reason we have the right to come with all boldness before Thy presence seeking Thy benediction, and this we do.

We ask Thee to take this Church Universal and make it the instrument of Thy love make it the instrument that will speak for Thee; and live for Thee. Help us that we might be able to be everything that Thou wouldst have us, as a Church, to be in these momentous days.

We would ask Thee to bless the nation of which we are a part. We are thankful, indeed, as citizens of the land that the lines have fallen out unto us in such pleasant places. We bless Thee that we have this great country that we can love and serve. We thank Thee for a government that is representative of the people, and we pray that this government of the people, by the people, and for the people, shall never perish from the earth. We pray that it shall be an instrument in Thy hands to tear down every

form of tyranny and raise up everything that is right and good for people everywhere.

Let Thy gracious benediction rest upon our President and his family, and Thy blessings upon the members of Congress and all who shall have charge of our judicial system across the nation's life and the world. Be with our representatives at home and abroad.

We would ask Thee to speak to us today a plain, simple message of Thy love and grace and guidance. Help us that we might be receptive and obedient in putting ourselves beneath Thy will. We face the future not knowing what tomorrow shall issue forth, nor what this week shall bring before we gather together again, but whatever comes, with our hand in Thy hand, and looking into Thy face, may we trust Thee for every moment and every step of the way. Through Jesus Christ, Our Lord. Amen.

Sermon of July 5, 1964 by Dr. Albert P. Shirkey

Dr. Albert P. Shirkey
Mount Vernon Place Methodist Church
Washington, D. C.

SEEKING to follow
Christ's example of
intercession,
I WILL PRAY DAILY
for people who are oppressed,
the hungry, the fearful, the lost,
for leaders engaged in the affairs
of our nation and all nations,
for those who work that the world
may know the Saviour, and
for a faith to believe that God
grants petitions made in
Christ's name and according
to His will —